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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07  
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15  
USIA-06 DHA-02 /058 W

R 131403Z MAY 77  
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7630  
INFO AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

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FROM ASSISTANT SECRETARY TODMAN

EO 11652 GDS  
TAGS: PFOR SHUM OVIP AR US (TODMAN, TERENCE A)  
SUBJ: MEETING BETWEEN ASSTANT SECRETARY TODMAN AND  
PRESIDENT VIDELA OF ARGENTINA

1. WITH THE SPECIAL ASSISTANCE OF THE VENEZUELAN GOVT,  
ARRANGEMENTS WERE MADE FOR A 25-MINUTE MEETING BETWEEN  
ASSISTANT SECRETARY TODMAN AND PRESIDENT VIDELA. THE  
MEETING OCCURRED ON MAY 11 BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT'S  
ARRIVAL AT THE AIRPORT AND THE TRADITIONAL WREATH-LAYING  
CEREMONY AT BOLIVAR'S TOMB.

2. VIDELA BEGAN BY SAYING THAT HE HAD BEEN CONCERNED TO  
LEARN THAT I WOULD BE IN BA AT A TIME WHEN HE WOULD  
BE ABSENT, THE FOREIGN MINISTER HOSPITALIZED FOLLOWING  
THE BRUTAL ATTACK AND OTHER LEADING FIGURES OF  
THE GOVT PRESENT IN VENEZUELA. THIS MEANT  
THAT HIS GOVT WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN ABLE TO GIVE  
ME THE KIND OF RECEPTION AND ATTENTION THEY WOULD  
HAVE LIKED. HE WAS THEREFORE VERY RELIEVED AND  
PLEASED THAT IT WAS POSSIBLE FOR THIS MEETING TO  
TAKE PLACE.

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3. VIDELA SAID THAT HE BELIEVED IN THE VALUE OF PERSONAL  
CONTACT FOR THE BUILDING OF UNDERSTANDING AND THAT WAS  
WHAT ARGENTINA WAS SEEKING. THEY WERE COMMITTED TO THE  
DIGNITY OF THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE PROMOTION OF HUMAN  
RIGHTS. THEY WERE TROUBLED THEREFORE TO FIND THEMSELVES  
IN THIS SITUATION IN WHICH THE WELL-BEING OF THE COUNTRY  
WAS BEING ATTACKED BY TERRORISTS AND GUERRILLAS. HE  
DID NOT CALL IT A WAR BECAUSE HE DID NOT WISH TO DIGNIFY  
THE ENEMIES OF THE COUNTRY WITH THE CONDITION OF  
BELLIGERENCY BUT, IN FACT, IT WAS A WAR SITUATION THAT  
THEY WERE FACING. THE COUNTRY WAS GOING THROUGH THREE  
CRISES AT THE SAME TIME-- THE POLITICAL CRISIS WITH  
THE POLITICAL SYSTEM IN DISARRAY AND THE COUNTRY ABOUT  
TO DISINTEGRATE, THE ECONOMIC CRISIS AND NOW THE ATTACKS  
OF VIOLENCE. THE OPPONENTS OF THE REGIME WERE ATTACKING  
ON ALL FRONTS INCLUDING THE PSYCHOLOGICAL. PART OF THE  
REASON FOR THE ATTACK ON THE FOREIGN MINISTER WAS TO  
ABORT THE PRESENT VISIT TO VENEZUELA. IT WAS THEIR  
INTENTION TO USE THIS AS FURTHER JUSTIFICATION OF FEAR ON  
THE PART OF THE GOVT AND ITS INABILITY TO FUNCTION.  
IT WAS TO DENY THEM THIS POSSIBILITY THAT HE HAD  
DECIDED TO CONTINUE WITH THE VISIT.

4. I EXPRESSED MY APPRECIATION TO HIM FOR TAKING THE

Department of State, A/GIS/IPS/SRP  
Change to \_\_\_\_\_  
( ) Release ( ) Exclise ( ) Deny ( ) Declassify  
Exemptions b ( ) ( ) E.O. 13526 25x ( ) ( )  
Declassify after \_\_\_\_\_  
With concurrence of: \_\_\_\_\_  
IPS by AK obtained \_\_\_\_\_ Not obt. \_\_\_\_\_  
Date 10-14-10

Declassified Case: 17X-8706 Date: 08-30-2013

TIME TO RECEIVE ME. I SAID THAT I SHARED HIS BELIEF IN THE IMPORTANCE OF PERSONAL CONTACT AND WELCOMED THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXPLAIN TO HIM OUR VIEWS ON THE GENERAL PROBLEM OF HUMAN RIGHTS TO WHICH HE HAD REFERRED. FIRST I WISHED TO EXPRESS MY REGRET FOR THE BRUTAL ATTACK ON THE FOREIGN MINISTER AND MY HOPE FOR HIS COMPLETE AND SPEEDY RECOVERY. I WAS HAPPY HOWEVER THAT HE HAD DECIDED TO MAKE THE TRIP IN ANY EVENT, SINCE THE MORE THE GOVT COULD SHOW THAT IT WAS IN CONTROL OF THE SITUATION BY CARRYING OUT ITS NORMAL FUNCTIONS AND BY APPLYING THE LAW THE LESS WOULD BE THE VICTORY OF THE

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TERRORISTS IN THIS REGARD. I SAID THAT WE UNDERSTOOD THE NEED FOR THEM TO TAKE FIRM ACTION BUT THAT THE MORE RESTRAINT DEMONSTRATED BY THE GOVT IN TERMS OF THE MEASURES USED AND THE AVOIDANCE OF RETALIATION IN KIND THE GREATER WOULD BE THE PROSPECTS FOR UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT THE GOVT WAS TRYING TO DO. THE MORE FOREIGNERS OR OUTSIDERS THAT COULD VISIT AROENTINA TO OBTAIN A TRUE PICTURE OF THE SITUATION THE BETTER WOULD BE THE OPPORTUNITY FOR GAINING UNDERSTANDING.

5. I ADDED THAT I WAS SORRY THE SCHEDULING PROBLEMS WOULD NOT PERMIT ME TO VISIT BA ON THIS TRIP BUT THAT I WOULD TRY TO INCLUDE IT ON THE VERY NEXT TRIP I TOOK TO THE AREA. PRESIDENT VIDELA SAID THAT HE WOULD LOOK FORWARD TO RECEIVING ME THERE. HE UNDERSTOOD OUR POSITION IN DEFENSE OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND HOPED WE WOULD UNDERSTAND THE PROBLEMS HE FACED IN APPLYING IT IN THE SAME WAY, GIVEN THE SITUATION HE FACES.  
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